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TAGS: [IR](#) [IZ](#) [PGOV](#)  
SUBJECT: TROUBLE AMONG MAYSAN'S SADRISTS

Classified By: Acting Political Counselor Greg D'Elia for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

[1](#)1. (U) This is a PRT Maysan reporting cable.

[1](#)2. (S/NF) Summary: Maysan,s Sadrists are challenged by a splintering within the Jaysh al-Mahdi (JAM) and mounting public discontent over poor governance, according to a US-based Maysani businessman. He said the criminal and former Baathist members of JAM are driving out the more tolerant religious adherents, while Sadr,s efforts to clean up the militia are causing criminal elements to flee to Iran and join the Iranian-directed Jaysh al-Sirri (JAS - Secret Army). The Maysan Governor and his staff are facing significant public and tribal pressure over service delivery and unemployment. The political future of the Sadrists will depend on improving government performance but JAM-driven corruption and their own administrative inexperience would hamstring the effort. Finally, both Iranian and Emirati security services exert influence through economic reconstruction offices and tribal engagement. End Summary.

JAM Splinters in Maysan  
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[1](#)3. (S/NF) On December 24, 2007, Mr. Saad Ouda al-Mussawi, a US Legal Permanent Resident of Maysani origin (STRICTLY PROTECT), visited the PRT and shared his perspectives on the current challenges within his province. Mussawi told us that JAM in Maysan is comprised of three groups: 1) religious followers of Sadiq al-Sadr, 2) released criminals, and 3) former Baathists. He described the first as generally low-key and idealistic, the second as having few options and little money, and the third as Shi,a co-opted by the former regime. Mussawi said harassment from Baathists and criminals led some of the religious followers to break away and form a group in line with their values called the Tajammah al-Watani al-Iraqi (National Iraqi Gathering). He reported that JAM,s appeal is showing signs of waning in al-Amarah, observing that Friday prayer attendance at three JAM-affiliated mosques has decreased by 75%.

[1](#)4. (S/NF) Mussawi said a recent Sadr initiative to announce the names of 'bad actors' within JAM in a weekly reading is causing criminal elements to flee to Iran. In Iran the rogue members are trained and equipped by the Iranian security services and some are recruited into the Jaysh al-Sirri (Secret Army) and sent back to Maysan. Mussawi explained that Jaysh al-Sirri members are easily identified as impoverished peasants or urban poor with expensive automatic weapons. This group operates secretly under the direction of a local Iranian security service liaison. Mussawi offered an anecdote to illustrate the delicate relationship between the Governor and JAM. 4-5 months ago the Governor declined an invitation to a JAM-sponsored party. Outraged senior JAM leaders began publicly cursing the Governor, forcing him to rush to the party and publicly apologize.

Failures in services, governance, and security

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15. (S/NF) Mussawi said there is growing popular resentment towards the Sadrists for failing to improve service delivery after assuming office. Recent rains in Amarah left standing pools of water, spreading garbage and sewage and making travel within the city difficult. Governmental representatives blame the Kuwaiti-based contractor responsible for installing sewage systems but others point to weak provincial government oversight. (Note: Larger-scale flooding in April 2007 led to similar public outrage. End Note.) Mussawi added that government attempts to pass the blame are failing due to the lack of CF presence and terrorism attacks. He reported that local tribes regularly badger the Governor for patronage and jobs, repeating that jobs are the single most important issue for tribal leaders in Maysan. Mussawi said Governor al-Maliki is an inexperienced public administrator and lacks a qualified staff. Embarrassment arose during the recent visit by a senior official of the electricity ministry when it became obvious that the Governor's staff was unaware of their own contracting authority. As another example, Mussawi said that a delegation sent to Japan for discussions on marshland development support returned empty-handed with no meaningful outcomes.

16. (S/NF) Mussawi predicted that, due to growing resentment to JAM, the local Sadrist party (Hussein Ideology Forum - HIF) would struggle to retain its large majority and be forced to govern as part of a coalition on the Provincial Council. Mussawi explained that the political future of the Sadrists depended on delivering jobs and services but that JAM-driven corruption and administrative inexperience would hamstring their efforts.

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17. (S/NF) Mussawi claimed that following the December 12 bombing and the subsequent dismissal of the Chief of Police (Hussein Aziz, reportedly leader of the Abu Ali tribe of Majar al-Kabir), Abu Ali tribal members raided a police station and stole a number of police cars. Mussawi was unsure whether the tribal members ever returned the cars. He added that the new chief, Gen. Ali Ohaim, has little relevant experience but is from the same tribe as the Governor.

Iranian interference, foreign tribal engagement  
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18. (S/NF) Mussawi said that the Iranian security services are active in Maysan and the rest of the south. He highlighted the role of economic reconstruction offices located in major cities in the south and staffed by Iraqi Arabs operating under Iranian control and direction. Mussawi added that Iran has repeatedly engaged with tribal leaders throughout the south. Apart from Iran, he noted that the United Arab Emirates (UAE) recently established a linkage with tribal leaders in southern Iraq. According to al-Mussawi, the head of the UAE security services hosted the leaders of a number of southern tribes at the Burj al-Arab hotel in Dubai. The Emiratis offered the sheikhs each USD 150,000 and a new car in return for establishing local 'tribal council' offices. The UAE would have access to these offices and use them to counter the central Iraqi government and keep Iraq weak.

Bio Notes on al-Mussawi  
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19. (S/NF) Mussawi is an Iraqi exile who fled the country in the late 1980s, spending 2 years in Qom, Iran before stays in Syria and Saudi Arabia. He later resettled in the US and since liberation has periodically traveled to Maysan and Baghdad. He claims relationships with key former exile/resistance personalities, including Abdul-Aziz al-Hakim, Ahmed Chalabi, and Maysan Governor Adil al-Maliki. He also claimed a close relationship with former Maysan Chief of

Police (and Badrist archnemesis of the Governor), Abu Maythem. Mussawi has been in Maysan for a month, building relationships with key players and is planning to set up a construction engineering firm to participate in reconstruction activities. He claims to have hosted the Governor and the Governor's family at his home in Maysan. He will return to the US in another 3-4 months.

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